



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 100148

Date Received

2007 SEP -5 PM 1:06
05-JUL-2007

Repository ☐

Reference No.

10195384

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Address

City

HAKETTSTOWN

State

NJ

Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Evening Telephone Number

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorized signature, please print your name or address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner *[Signature]* Date 7/18/07

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side

1ZWFT61L5X5

Make

MERCURY

Model

COUGAR

Model Year

1999

Date Purchased

11 June 00

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

Ray Price Ford (570) 420-1100

Engine:

No. Cylinders 6

Fuel Type:

Gas

Original Owner

☐

Dealer's City

Stroudsburg,

State

PA

Zip Code

18360

Transmission Type

AUTOMATIC

☒ Antilock Brakes

☒ Cruise Control

Powertrain

FRONT WHEEL DRIVE

Vehicle Component Code

061000 ENGINE AND ENGINE COOLING ENGINE

Multiple Failure: 5

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)

05 JUL 2007
22 June

Failure Mileage

180000
183,000

Failure Speed

Backing and R.R.M's Revving (w/hesitation surrounding backing)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOTM9ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment

☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System:

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(ies).)

Crash

☐ Yes ☒ No

Fire

☐ Yes ☒ No

Number of Persons Injured

0

Number of Deaths

0

Reported to Police

N

Narrative Description of Incident(S), Crash(es), and Injury(ies).

Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e., parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

TL*THE CONTACT OWNS A 1999 MERCURY COUGAR. THE CONTACT STATED THAT THE ENGINE REVS VERY HIGH AND THEN THE VEHICLE BEGINS TO JERK. THE CONTACT HAS TAKEN THE VEHICLE TO THE DEALER ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, BUT THEY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DIAGNOSE THE CAUSE OF FAILURE. THE CONTACT INFORMED THE MANUFACTURER ABOUT THE FAILURE AND MENTIONED THAT THE DEALER CHANGED SEVERAL PARTS. THE MANUFACTURER STATED THAT THERE WERE NO CURRENT RECALLS OR SERVICE BULLETINS FOR THIS FAILURE. THE SERPENTINE BELT, THROTTLE ASSEMBLY, AND VACUUM TUBE WERE REPLACED, BUT THE FAILURE PERSISTS. THE CURRENT AND FAILURE MILEAGES WERE 180,000.

approx. 183,000

VIN # 1ZWFT61L5X5

OVER

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974-Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Failure(s), Crash(es), and Injury(ies)

Please see ~~letter~~ stating that engine diagnostics were performed, despite the fact that the Cougar is "revving". Revving is indicating that the TRANSMISSION is not engaging, not the engine. I started from 1st day to 5th day I thought it was a transmission problem (due to an object hitting/striking under carriage), & feeling transmission was not working right. They did unnecessary repairs to fix the problem of revving & Bucking Re: Rpm spike.

I want full compensation for \$570.02 for Labor + parts + tax @ car rental

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

of \$123.72 = \$693.74

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

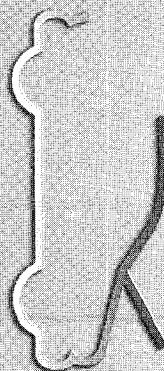
FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO 73173 WASHINGTON, D.C.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY NATL. HWY. TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMIN.

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Defects Investigation, NVS-210
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590



**Think your vehicle
has a safety defect?**



If so:

**Use the enclosed
form to file a report.**

or visit:

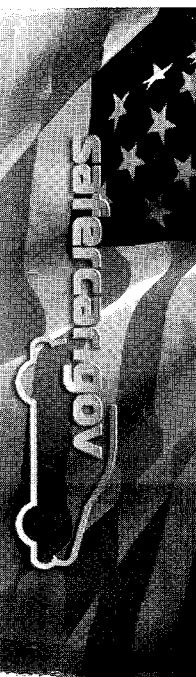
www.safercar.gov

or call:

**Vehicle Safety Hotline
888-327-4236**

nhtsa
www.nhtsa.dot.gov
people saving people

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ)
U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



Phone: [REDACTED]

♦ Hackettstown, NJ
♦ Work: ([REDACTED])

July 25, 2007

RE: 1999 Mercury Cougar

To whom it may concern,

On 27 June 2007, I dropped my 1999 Mercury Cougar, V6 Automatic off at Ray Price Stroud Ford for repair. I reported that my problems began on 22 June 2007, when I had an object (wood, metal, or rock) strike the undercarriage of my car. I described the problems experienced as a spike in the RPM, as well as hesitation and bucking. I further mentioned that I thought that the problems might be related to a transmission problem.

The dealer replaced the serpentine belt and throttle assembly system and informed me that my car was repaired. I picked up car on 30 June 2007, and 30 minutes after driving it off the lot, I experienced the same problem originally described. I had paid \$123.72 for a rental car and \$516.12 for the diagnostic and labor fees. Yet, the car was not repaired.

I immediately returned to Ray Price Ford and demanded to speak to the mechanic who worked on my car. Instead, the same Service Manager (Dave) was brought in to discuss the matter with me. I agreed to allow them to try to correct the problem. This time, the dealership replaced the vacuum tube's rubber connecting hose. I was charged \$57.13 for an additional diagnostic fee, but not charged for parts or labor. Again, I was informed that the car was ready for pick up.

Once again, the vehicle began to experience a spike in RPM, hesitation and bucking. I immediately phone Dave at Ray Price Ford and returned the car to the dealership. I was forced to leave my vehicle for further repair and rent another vehicle from Enterprise. This time the Ford Dealer said they would cover the rental car bill until they fixed the car. My vehicle remained at the dealer from 30 June to 3 July.

I picked up my vehicle from Ray Price Ford on 3 July 2007 and attempted to drive to work in Tobyhanna, PA. Approaching the Rt. 380 elevation, my car again began to rev, surge, and buck. I stopped along Rt. 80, notified Ford that the vehicle was not repaired, and drove it back to them after my shift ended. This time, they provided a Ford car free of charge, so that they could continue to troubleshoot the problem.

I returned for my vehicle on 5 July 2007. The Ray Price Ford Dealer attempted to charge me another \$57.13 for a diagnostic fee even though they still hadn't diagnosed or repaired the source of the problem despite having the vehicle for almost 10 days. I told them that I would not pay another cent toward diagnostic fees until they could prove that they had actually diagnosed and corrected my problem.

Once again, I asked to speak to my mechanic. Once again, I was denied. I took car back home without being charged. As I drove through Hackettstown the following morning, my vehicle again began to rev and buck. Frustrated, I called Dave at Stroud Ford to tell him it was not diagnosed correctly for 10 days and that the car is still NOT fixed. This time, I drove the vehicle home and paid to have the vehicle towed to my previous mechanic over an hour away in Elmwood Park, NJ.

My Ford experience was addressed to an ASE Master certified mechanic, Mike Baxter. In addition to 20+ years as an experienced mechanic, he is also Ford certified (as well as being certified under several other brands). This is what he had to say about the problems with the Cougar, as well as my experience with Ford.

He was informed of the make and model of the vehicle, the object strike of the undercarriage and the symptoms experienced: RPM spike, hesitation and bucking. He was also informed of the tests and repairs performed by the Ford mechanics which include: battery check; monitoring the Mass Air Flow Sensors; monitoring the O2 Sensors; long and short term fuel trims; mechanical fuel pressure test and checking the Idle Control Valve. In addition, the following repairs were performed: replaced the serpentine belt, throttle assembly, and vacuum hose. According to Mike, these are all engine-related function tests and repairs.

Mike said that because there is an RPM spike that accompanies the hesitating and bucking, it tells him that the engine is working fine and that the transmission is not engaging. He said that since I said that the object struck the vehicle (entering underneath) on the driver's side (where the transmission is) that it is possible that the object (wood, metal, or a rock) may have damaged one or more of the solenoid sensors in the transmission. He said that this could occur even though the transmission is encased, because the solenoids are located on the bottom of the transmission pan. Apparently, there is a solenoid for every gear, so it's possible that the solenoid that controls the shift for gears 1, 2 and 5 are fine, but 3 and 4 are damaged.

He said that it's also possible that the Vehicle Speed Sensor was damaged. He said that the shift solenoids are triggered from the data from the VSS. So, if the VSS is damaged then the shift solenoid may interpret the speed at a "0" and then not engage properly. He said that if a mechanic had a newer scanner that can monitor "shift points, mph and working solenoids" they would be able to troubleshoot this.

He said that typical shift points are:

From 1st to 2nd gear - registers at 12-15mph
From 2 to 3 - registers at 27-31 mph
From 3-4 - registers at 43-50 mph

So, if the VSS is damaged, it might not be reported the correct speed when the transmission attempts to shift gears. Similarly, if the solenoid for that particular gear is broken, I would expect the same type of problems to occur. Ultimately though, he said that if a mechanic doesn't have a scanner with the capability to monitor all of those functions, the car should be brought to a transmission specialist.

He also mentioned that typically dealerships do not employ transmission mechanics. If a transmission problem is detected or suspected and the transmission is under warranty, the dealer will replace the transmission. If there is no warranty, the dealer will inform the customer to take the car elsewhere. As a result, I have learned that Ray Price Ford has wasted both my time and money on engine function tests and unnecessary repairs. After what Mike said about the "RPM spike", it would appear that this would be "Mechanics 101" level stuff to a "trained mechanic".

The recorded advertisement on Ford's toll-free number claims: "Factory trained service technicians trained in Ford cars.....who are better than anyone". Who better than a Ford certified mechanic would know the information above.

I believe that Ray Price Ford took advantage of me, overcharged me for unnecessary repairs, inaccurate diagnostics and caused me a financial burden for car rentals. Do your Ford mechanics have scanners that can monitor the "shift points, mph and working solenoids". If they do, why wasn't it used? If they don't, then why don't they have it?

These mechanics should have possessed the knowledge of what parts/functions COULD be responsible for my problems rather than hooking it up to a computer and reacting to fault codes that may or may not have been reported.

I am left to doubt whether or not these "factory trained mechanics" are even certified. And if they are, what are the testing standards? On the day I dropped off my vehicle at Ray Price Ford, I told them that I suspected a transmission problem. It would appear that I was correct all along. Does that make me a "Ford Certified" mechanic.

In light of the information provided, I am demanding a full refund for the "services rendered" by Ray Price Ford, in the amount of \$696.97. This amount will cover the unnecessary charges incurred as a result of the inept handling of my vehicle's problem, which include:

- TOTAL \$ DIAGNOSIC AND LABOR FROM FORD: \$400.40
- TOTAL \$ PARTS FROM FORD: \$140.41
- TAX: \$32.44
- TOTAL \$ CAR RENTAL FROM JUNE 27-30, 2007: \$123.72

I would expect this to be handled upon receipt of notification. I am prepared to escalate any further delay to the following organizations for assistance:

- US Dept of Transportation, Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- Attorney General's Office, Website Complaints: www.Attorneygeneral.gov
- Better Business Bureau in PA
- Ford Motor Plant in Michigan
- State Farm Car Insurance Company (NJ) (Claim due to wood, metal, or rock (object) hitting undercarriage on Rt. 80 and causing this problem under Comprehensive/Collision, w/ a \$1,000 deductible.
- Federal Trade Commission

I hope to settle this matter immediately. Please call me at the above work number no later than close of business Friday, August 3, 2007. If you agree to a full settlement in the amount of \$696.97 (which is NOT covered under the first \$1,000 of my Comprehensive/Collision Claim with State Farm), I will ask that you put it in writing. Otherwise, I will escalate this issue through the appropriate channels for action and will add additional damages, such as: time off from work, litigation fees and pain and suffering, if necessary.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

